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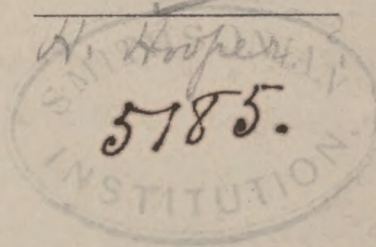
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M O R C A,

THE BLIND PAGE.

A TRAGEDY, IN FIVE ACTS.

Henry Hooper

BY IGNIS., *pseud.*



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P R O E M .

THE present demand of the Stage, for Plays especially adapted to the talents of certain actors and actresses, has determined me to trust my production to the care of play-readers, few though they be, rather than to carve it up to fit the specialties of Mr. A., whose *forte* is bathos, or Miss B., whose charm lies in tears. It is one of the signs of the times, that the dramatist has changed places with the actor. It is the *artiste* who hangs his talents and his powers out for public admiration, and the playwright who delineates him; thus the actor is ably represented, and the author is poet laureate to the sock and buskin. As no Thespian god or goddess has honored *me* with a call to "portray" their idiosyncrasies, I am fain to put my play in print, and limit its acquaintance to readers of the Drama; not but what my vanity might feel flattered, if some distinguished player would lift it to fame by the genius of his mimic power. For myself, with some exceptions, I have received

more pleasure from the careful perusal of dramatic works, than in seeing one character *starred* and the rest *guttered*, as is often the case on the stage. To the reader's mind, all the parts are equally represented, and though bereft of the reality of dress and scenic effect, still not a maxim of worth, or point of wit, is lost through the carelessness or inefficiency of the player.

Though History has not furnished me the plot of the play, yet human nature is the assumed basis of its action. The reader must judge how far ignorance has obscured my vision, and to what extent impotence has limited the portrayal. I alone know with what earnestness I went to the task, and how sincerely I believed in its worth.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

GODFREY, *rightful Duke of Normandy.*

MORCA, *Son of Godfrey.*

MANUS, *Friend of Godfrey.*

GASLIE DE BYRNE, *the Usurper.*

DURHL, *a Lord in Waiting.*

CAFFA, “ “

WILFRED DE LORN, “

1st KNIGHT, “

2d “ “

JAHLO, *the Fool.*

GURTH, *Jailor.*

ALBERT, *a Page.*

FILINA, *Daughter of Godfrey.*

MAUD, *an Orphan.*

Retainers, Servants, Soldiers, etc.

M O R C A ,
THE BLIND PAGE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Front of a Castle in Caen; SOLDIERS passing in to martial music.*

Enter, oppositely, WILFRED and MANUS. Music ceases.

MANUS. Sir Wilfred! welcome to Caen, thou lion
Of conquest! Come, brush off the dust of war,
And let gentle peace soften thy late toils.
You come as fresh from the fields of strife,
As though content sat firmer in thy heart
Than doth victory upon thy sword.

WILFRED. Contentment! fy, 'tis the sluggard's heir-
loom,
A cobweb spun by sloth to wrap the souls

Of idlers in ; he is not familiar
With your face, good comrade. What news at Home ?
Some private discord gnaws at your peace,
Your visage bears more curves than content
Usually breeds. The angry god is with you.
Tush man—e'en while I speak, his pale terror
Gleams from thine eyes.

MANUS. You are right, Wilfred ; my spirit is torn
At the sad sight of a friend's injuries.
I suffer doubly in my impotence
To aid, and compassion for his huge wrongs.
Your sword hath scarce cooled from the bloody fight
In defense of Christianity ;
While *he* whose penant you bore, stains the flag
With crimes an infidel would scorn.

WILFRED. Mean you the rightful Duke's overthrow
And deposition by the fierce Gaslie ?
'Twas a deep trick, and daringly carried.
It owed its consummation to the nobles,
Grown restless beneath the peaceful rule
Of Godfrey ; their hot heads preferred civil war
To the luxury of idleness.

MANUS. If that were all, I'd silence my anger,
And thank his clemency. But mad with spleen,
Puffed with envy, and cruel with conquest,
He turned upon the Duke's son, Morca,

And bade them pluck his eyes out! Damned deed!
Mark me, Delorn, this unnatural act
Had no greater cause, save that he feared the boy's
Noble mien might win him avenging friends.
Gaslie dreaded the man, so jagged the germ
That it should grow ungainly.

WILFRED. A fair sample of Norman cruelty,—
The key to it is in my remembrance.
When Godfrey reigned, and Morca was ducal
Heir, Gaslie was a poor adventurer.
His Danish extract, and untutored ways,
Oft served the witty Prince for rasping jest,
And cutting irony; which would madden
The untamed soul of the poor but bold Knight.
Implacable in hate, quick to anger,
He is a deadly enemy.
The foolish proverb, "drunk as a Dane,"
Bandied at him by a jeering comrade,
Drew instant death on the insulter's head!
True to his motto of "never forget,"
He has retaliated with terrible
Exactness. Fortune hath given the time,
His dauntless soul, the will and victory.
Cruelty travels in the train of conquest.
What says Godfrey to the deed?

MANUS. He knows it not;
And, by the cross of the Crusaders, I fear
To tell him. Morca, the staff of his age,
The last prop of his falling fortune!

WILFRED. 'Twill be a sad tale for his hoary years.
Do not defer it, but in to him, comrade,
And I'll to the Duke with my war tidings;
If they gain me a welcome reception,
I'll hazard a plea for the deposed Duke.

Exit, WILFRED.

MANUS. (*solus*) Why what is man, when a flippant
word,

A cunning phrase, a pungent jest
On his self-esteem, wounds him deeper
Than a deadly stroke at his life!

'Tis even so!

Rob him, cheat him, ay fight him, fair or foul,
And his anger is short-lived, easy calmed;
But raise a laugh at his infirmities,
And life itself scarce pays the penalty.

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT. The Duke commands thee to his presence,
my Lord.

MANUS. I will obey his pleasure. (*Exit SERV.*)
I must be cautious with my complainings,

For in this atmosphere of restraint
Not a word but finds its way to the Duke;
And he is not slow to revenge!

SCENE II.—*Anteroom in the Palace.*

Enter DURHL and CAFFA.

DURHL. When did he return?

CAFFA. Not a moment since,—
He brings stirring news of victory!
There is brave fighting in England; Rufus
Needs more Normans to chastise his Saxon hordes.
Come, the Duke summons us to the council.
Stay; whom have we here?

DURHL. Godfrey's fool, a Court jester,
A perfect blacksmith in witty phrases,
The king of jests and jeers.

CAFFA. A fool! I do not understand you.
Was idiocy a mark of courage
With our late Duke, that he favored its growth?

DURHL. With him even fooling was a talent; come—

Enter JAHLO, fantastically dressed.

JAHLO. Great times, and great men. Cutting
throats is the great science. How do, fellow-soldiers;
what is the latest from Slaughterdom?

CAFFA. Fellow, what mean you?

JAHLO. Nay, comrade, never huck up your back, for we are all equal.

CAFFA. How equal, sir?

JAHLO. In that we are servants to the Duke. By a neat syllogism I could prove you as witty as myself. I am the Duke's most obedient servant, bear his colors, and am a fool; ye are servants, wear the livery, and, consequently, are fools. And yet of us three, I'll swear the Duke's the biggest.

DURHL. Unravel the reason you soldier of lies.

JAHLO. We serve a man; our bondage ends with his death; while he is a slave to a bad passion, that deceives him in this world, and will damn him in the next. Thereby, he is a fool among fools. Now tell me: When does a man do best?

DURHL. When he speaks and acts justly.

JAHLO. I defy him to begin.

CAFFA. When he fights for glory.

JAHLO. Pure murder in the first degree.

BOTH. Well, when?

JAHLO. Why, he does his best, when he does nothing. For then neither murdered phantoms, from the past, nor grim consequences, in the future, can rise up and shriek: Thus didst thou! for look you, he never did any thing.

CAFFA. Ah! Take that as a sample of my best.

(striking him.)

Come, Durhl, enough of this babble.

Exeunt.

JAHLO. *(rubbing his head)* Of a verity, there is more weight than wit in your arguments. Men are pretty equally blessed with the destructive and defensive power; those who have not very weighty fists have sharp teeth, and on my life, I would rather encounter a fighting gladiator, than a woman with a long tongue. The sword can kill, but the tongue can rack, kill, and afterward damn. Pain is a great help to philosophy; a toothache makes a Seneca of me, instant.

Enter MAUD.

Ha! here is one that cannot break the fifth commandment, however she may dish up the other nine. For whom are those flowers?

MAUD. For good Prince Morca.
I would they were pearls, that my gratitude
Might enrich him. He loves sweet flowers,
And they are all my poverty can offer,
Except my love, for his kind protection.
They are emblems of himself, so freely
They shed perfume and sweetest incense
Upon all who approach.

JAHLO. Quite a flowery speech! But petticoats and wooden shoes you might have spared yourself the trouble, for Morca will not deign to look at them. (for the best of reasons, inasmuch as he has no eyes.) (*aside.*)

MAUD. Jahlo, you are a privileged jester,
And may mock me, if it please your fancy.
'T was but yestere'en he took my simple gift,
And said it was worth a lost dukedom!

JAHLO. Now mark me, thou simplest descendant
from the most deceived of women. My sayings are
pungent in truth, if scarce of wit. If Morca looks at
them or thee, I'll eat the flowers, and wear him in my
cap for a plume!

MAUD. Then I'll take them to the imprisoned duke,
And their pretty mouths shall tell fairy tales
Of love and beauty, that his dungeon 'll sink
In oblivion, and he live again in the past.
They can sing, Jahlo?

JAHLO. Ha! let me hear the buzz of their petall'd
music.

MAUD. (*sings*) Pretty flowers, pretty flowers,
Sweet smiling little things,
Fairy elves of beauty's bowers,
With rainbow-tinted wings,
How I love ye, how I love ye,
For the bright and happy ray

That ye shed on me so softly,
As I sing my simple lay.

JAHLO. (*sings*) Silly flowers, silly flowers,
What stupid, vapid things!
With lives as short as hours,
And as useful, near, as kings';
How I hate ye, how I hate ye,
For the gaudy look ye bear,
And your frailty, which make ye
Fit emblems of the Fair.

MAUD. (*sings*) Fragrant dreamers, dimpled prettyness,
Bright trophies for the brave;

JAHLO. (*sings*) Living types of fickleness
To ornament the grave.

MAUD. (*sings*) Sad meteors from a better world
Of purity and bliss;

JAHLO. (*sings*) From which thy vanity got hurled,
To vegetate in this.

MAUD and JAHLO (*chorus*) Pretty flowers,—Silly
flowers, etc., etc.

SCENE III.—*Interior of a dungeon; the deposed duke, Godfrey, reclining on a couch; Filina seated near.*

GODFREY. No more, my child, no more;
Your fearful surmises are more torturous
Than the worst of Gaslie's cruelties.

As for myself, this sickness will not last
Beyond a moon or so: change of air—place,
Hath engendered it; time will wear it off.
For loss of power and regal station,
I have found quiet, contemplation, peace,
Reflection and knowledge of my true worth,—
A boon that experience gives at last.
Within this stony domain, my child,
I shall grow intimate with father Time—
Watch his deep, ponderous pace, and wonder
How I ever thought he flew. With Morca
And thee I shall have state enough,
Affection will fill the lack of servitors.
O, Filina! we'll be philosophers,
And weigh the worth of things we may not have.

FILINA. But Morca—how will his untamed spirit
The galling chain of circumstances, [bear
That drags him from a prince to a peasant?
When Gaslie was but a knight adventurer,
Morca often played the witty cynic
On the rude, unpolished Dane. The new duke,
Armed with such fatal power, ill-gotten,
Will, in his burning vengeance, heap mountains
For every molehill.

GODFREY. Silence thy fears; my counsel shall keep
him

From the dread path of Gaslie's ambition ;
That black ban shall not harm my boy.

Enter MANUS.

To MANUS. Though a fervent friend, thou art a poor
courtier,
Manus, to linger by the setting sun,
'Stead of greeting the rising luminary.
Yet you are as welcome as freedom.

MANUS. An you mean Gaslie, he is no sun,
Rather a comet, sowing hate and war
In his glittering track of fire.
My allegiance to your lordship
Is not a robe worn on state occasions,
But a sturdy muscle of your body.

GODFREY. Nay, and you flatter, I'll take back my
welcome.
I fear that Gaslie hath been teaching thee
To hide deep designs in shallow words.

MANUS. Never fear, my lord,
He does not like me well enough ;
I'm but poorly covered with his love.

GODFREY. But Morca—why comes he not ?
Hast seen him ? Hath the loss of my coronet
Ta'en with it my son, Manus ?
My dukedom and his love, lost at one blow ?

Is it the chilly atmosphere that pales
So suddenly thy face, or these sombre walls
That shadow it with gloom?

Speak; there is terror in thy sad silence!

MANUS. If I do, my lord, each word I utter
Will cast a shadow on thy fortune's hope.
My tidings will start thee from thy couch,
As though a scorpion stung thee!
Between Gaslie and thy son, hate
Hath lodged a score of acts on either side,
Which the now puissant duke hath scored.
Morca is—

GODFREY. Dead?—murdered? No, no,
He dare not kill him!
His sated vengeance, already gorged with plunder,
Could scarce play the vampire, and kill my boy!

MANUS. He did not kill him, yet—

GODFREY. I knew it! Kill Morca!
The very nobles, yet new to his command,
Would rebel at such a bloody deed.

MANUS. Depend not on them, they are soldiers—
Inhumanly so; they answer the curb
Of steel, not sympathy. Mercy's a dream;
The sword is their only reasoner.

JAILOR. (*without*) Come, let me lead thee.

GODFREY. Who is he that needs such a leader?

My state, alas! is changed, when a jailor
Is usher of my presence-chamber.

Canst tell who 'tis, Manus?

MANUS. It is Morca, my lord.

GODFREY. Morca! Morca being led!

That's a strange sentence; does it not blister thy tongue
For uttering such rank treason?

Is he a dog, to need the guiding-string?

Or have the feet

That trod so nimbly on my palace floor,

Got lost in the damp mazes of my dungeon?

Methinks the prisoner should be easier found,

Than the Duke. Lead! Lead a flashing comet

With a blade of grass; then you may beckon

Morca with a rod!

*Enter GURTH, with MORCA, who pushes him aside and
feels his way. [Exit JAILOR.*

Why, what's this that creeps so wearily here,

Feeling its way like a snail? If I dared

To trust my eyes, they'd cheat me with a base

Counterfeit of mine own blood. By the Cross!

'Tis he, or his mane! Speak, thou phantom!

If death can find a voice, or woe a tongue,

Tell thy mission!

MANUS. O, cruel act, that robbed thy beauteous face
Of life, and left a jagged mask!

FILINA. (*going toward him*) Morca, is it thou?
Dost thou turn from me,
Thy sister Filina? Hold up thy face;
I would read in thine eyes the sad cause
Of thy strange manner. Dost sigh, too?
Tell me thy wrongs, my tears shall soothe them.
Thy face is bloody, and from thine eyelids
Trickles unsightly gore! O, brother!
Who hath thus scarred thy face? Look!
God of the just, he is blind!

GODFREY. Blind! Ope thine eyes, Morca,
And let their vivid lightnings burn up that word.
O, fate! fate! where was thy avenging hand,
When a fiend's claws stole those bright meteors!
Is it true they are gone, leaving thee
That bloody wreath for a badge of pity?
I can scarce believe Normandy owns
A slave, that would so jeopardize his soul
In marring thus God's handiwork!
A Prince,
In form and soul, stamped with nature's nobleness,
Beauty's pride and valor's own.
The scion of the Calanths, the bold pride
Of Norman youth—hope of my dearest hopes,
And builder of my ruined temple,—
Is, O blasting thought! a blind mole!

The curse of a dying man shall shrivel up
That hand, till the nerves bend and crack
Like scorched worms, and turn to putrid essence
The fingers that tore thee from sweet light!

MANUS. Gaslie's policy tempers his vengeance.
Morca dead, the bleeding ghost might haunt
His dreams; but Morca maimed, he lives unharmed.

GODFREY. Gaslie, your villainy hath reached me now!
This adder's bite hath pierced my very soul,
Its deadly venom corrodes my life.
Now my spirit wars to be free; it strikes
Madly the dusty garb that weighs it down.
Death lays his icy hand upon my heart;
Chilled, it pauses—then louder throbs;
Yet a few moments, and that fleet courser,
My life, shall have fled forever! (*falls.*)

FILINA. O, brother! astonishment hath chained
My tongue, and strangely fumed my reason.
Anger at the deed hath almost drowned
My pity and compassion for thy loss.
O, brother, shake off that silent sorrow,
Do not thus choke your grief; its inverted
Flame will sear and char the brain to madness.
O, speak!

Let the echo shake the throne of Gaslie—
Awaken mad despair and stern remorse

In his pulseless heart, and may their gnawings
Mar his soul worse than he has thy face.

MORCA. Blind! blind!

Great Saviour of the world! what have I done,
That thou shouldst let a mortal hand place me
In everlasting night?—and still he lives!

A Calanth, a Roll, a Norman noble,
Made a blind, buzzing bat in thy sweet face,
And *thou* not frown!

O misery, what a path is mine!

No sun, no moon, no light, not e'en a star,
With its little twinkle, to break the shadow
Of my eternal night! Morn, from his bed
I' the east—hazy eve, from the glowing west,
To *me* will rise no more—gone, gone forever!
Farewell, grassy slopes, green swards, and mossy hills;
Peak'd mountain-tops, crowned with fleecy clouds
And robed in silver mist; silent forests,
Sternly bending your high heads to the breeze,
Or proudly holding back the raving storm,
That roars and cracks in fragments your gaunt arms;
Brooks, glens, and dales, blest abode of peace,
Cavern and rude precipice, farewell!

A pitchy fence of night hides thee forever.

O, shade of Roghen Vald!

An envious, bloody hand hath plucked me

From this world of beauty, and wrapped my soul
In a pall of bleak nothingness!

GODFREY. The oak is struck! O, that its fall
Might crush the hand that fell'd it! Morca, thy hand;
My mortality leaves apace; death soon
Will blind me also. Come, thou shadow
Of life; there is refuge e'en in thee!

FILINA. Brother, your wrongs strike me with terror.
Are our bodies, lives, souls, in this ruffian's hand?
Is his black mind our future providence?
Is there no peace, honor, safety, love, life,
Save in the bent of his pernicious will?
Then let his blood—

MORCA. Blood! 'Tis the remnant of my vision—
The sea in which I float—the purple cloud
That presses on my brain!

FILINA. O, Fates of vengeance! sweep from among us
This pest of sin—strike him with sudden death!
Give me a rod to scourge this terror
To his tomb!

MORCA. Thou hast leaped, sister, into the very arms
Of my enterprize. O, repeat that music!
Filina, here in this dungeon swear—

MANUS. Peace! Morca, peace! Thy father dies!
Let his ghost pass in silence.

MORCA. Better its parting be told in thunder!

Come, sister; here, by his couch of sorrow,
Swear to aid me in retribution:—
To know no pleasure, enjoy no peace—
To banish youth's fancies, love's airy dreams—
Never to unbend the stern mind, to jest,
Smile, or play, till this blot in our 'scutcheon
Of honor is washed with the tyrant's blood!
Quick, sister!
Let our father's parting soul hear the oath,
And record it in heaven!

FILINA. I swear it, by the shades of my ancestors!
May a loathed life and fearful death be mine,
If I swerve from the dread task!

GODFREY. O, Morca, I— (*dies.*)

MORCA. Have heard the oath, and shall see it performed.

Enter WILFRED DE LORN.

WILFRED. Godfrey Calanth, by the gracious pleasure
Of Gaslie, Duke of Normandy,
You are free from this day, on conditions
As follows:—To quit France forever,
Leaving as hostages thy son and daughter.

MORCA. Who is the speaker?

MANUS. Wilfred de Lorn.

MORCA. Go tell the Duke, sir,

His prisoner is already free.
God's avant courier, Death—the fleetest
That flies—hath gathered him to his garner!

MANUS. Godfrey, alas! is dead.

WILFRED. Indeed! then his liberty is past infringement.

My message is yet but half delivered:
Morca and yourself, fair lady, must hie
To his presence—Gaslie needs pages!
He would have his greatness increased
By your attendance.

MANUS. Let him beware; there's a lurking danger
in excess!

FILINA. Pages to the Duke!

Why, what blasphemous insolence!
Bid him catch the rainbow for a coronet—
Pick with his little finger a star, to grace
The visor of his helmet.

MORCA. Softly, Filina; I have a sudden thought;
Be wary, and mar not its working.
The lion on the jackall often waits;
A shadow, sister, sometimes hides the sun.
Wilfred, you are a soldier, trained to scenes
Of death and bitter desolation;
I, alas! am but a novice;
Nought but time can still my passion's grief.

When the edge of my sorrow is worn, I'll obey
To the letter the Duke's commands.
You may so tell his dukeship.

WILFRED. By my remembrance of your lost state,
I will not roughen the tenor of your reply.

[*Exit* WILFRED.]

MORCA. I have a boon to ask of thee, Manus;
'Tis this: Be silent, dumb to what has passed
Within these walls. Should my future conduct
Startle you with its strangeness, heed it not.
Be generous to the last Calanth,
Giving him the benefit of your just thoughts.

MANUS. Willingly granted, Morca.
On me rely with faith as firm as truth:
There is no deceit in my composition.

MORCA. Spoken like a true friend.
Now lead away my sister to the Duke,
For I must be here alone. Filina,
Remember the oath!

[*Exeunt* FILINA and MANUS.]

(*Kneeling by the body,*) They are gone.
The blind boy mourns alone with the dead.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Throne room. DUKE seated in state.*

WILFRED, CAFFA, DURHL, KNIGHTS, *and* TRUMPETERS.

DUKE. Dead, say you? 't was sudden, was it not?

CAFFA. Ay, my liege, so Sir Wilfred brings the tale;
Grief gnawed through his cord of life.

DUKE. How fares our prisoner, Knight?

WILFRED. Dead, sire;
His spirit fled before thy fierce anger.

DUKE. My beating heart starts as from a dream,
At that word, death. We have met in the hunt,
And fleet Death has borne away the brush.
It is not well, and yet I would that all
My foes might feel the point of that cold dart. [*aside.*
Was grief the cause?

WILFRED. I heard it said, by one who watched his
misery,
That fortune's losses he bore quite tamely,
Viewing with apathy his poor estate.
Philosophy sat at his mouldy meals,
And made a rich feast of that sterile fare.
E'en chameleon fancy wove her brightest
Views for his dim gaze, arching the low dungeon
Rainbow-high with airy architecture,

And filling it with music's sweetest sounds.
Morca's bloody face drove away this dream;
Fatally wounded, he bit the dust!

DUKE. This short cut to eminence is a fatal
Path to many; o'er others' necks it lies.
The destiny that showed this road to fame,
Placed more steel in my hand than in my heart.
Pity now weeps at Morca's galling fate,
But ambition coldly scoffs! Away,
Pity shall never mar my greatness. (*aside*)
Go, Sir Knight, see to Godfrey's interment,
And let that same philosophy deck
With pomp the corse that in life it flattered.
Bring hither his heirs, for I have sworn
They shall be our pages.

Exit WILFRED.

DURHL. My liege, what will ye with the lands,
 moneys,
And possessions of the late Duke Godfrey?
A heritage for his son in lieu of sight?
Methinks there be brave soldiers in the camp,
Fitter for such honors than a blind boy.

DUKE. Let not your avarice distress you, sir,
I'll so bestow them that carping envy
Shall be silent. Tush, man, no angry looks,
My sword shall brook no rebel insolence.

CAFFA. What new campaign hath my lord?
A rusty sword is a true soldier's shame;
Ours have grown solid in their sheaths, for lack
Of war. We seem smitten pallid with ease,
And our o'ergrown limbs enervate with sloth.
Hath the Pope no heretics to teach
With Norman swords? France no lands minus owners?
England need of no Princes, or our neighbor,
The Dane, creditor for an insult?

DUKE. That want of enterprize gave me my seat,
To keep it I must busy them with war. (*aside*)
To Jerusalem! there plant the bannered cross,
In bold defiance of the heathen half-moon.
Saracens revel in Jerusalem,
Rifling the womb of Christianity.
Have you not heard the call to arms,
That comes thundering from the East?
Bands of turbaned infidels desecrate
The holy land, trampling its sacred vines,
And treating with scorn our holy father.
Arouse, Oh sons of gallant Normandy,
And with your swords beat back the paynim dogs
That pollute the temple of our religion.
The Saracen is a fitter foe
For your steel and arm than Saxon or Dane.
Sudden, fierce and invincible in fight,

He charges like a falcon on its prey.
With weapons of pure Damascus steel,
They'll cleave with ease the heaviest casque
In your armory ; ay, shave a ray of light,
So keen is their fatal edge. Their onslaught
Would fell your serried ranks, like reeds before the blast.

CAFFA. By the memory of Vald !
I'd like to try my Galand on their skulls.
What armor wear they ?

DUKE. None save the terror of their presence.
Swarthy sons of the sun, their brown faces
And linen-robed forms flit across their deserts
Like shadows from a passing storm-cloud !
Rich, proud, and natives of luxury,
The spirit's strong, but the body is decayed.
They count their riches by the pure ingot,
Lands by the mile, and wives by the dozen.
Your northern eyes ne'er saw such soft beauties,
As the fair women that fill his harem.
Their large black eyes would flash intoxication
At such stalwart cavaliers. Easy won,
The plunder of an hour would purchase ten.
These are but trifles in emolument's list
For the heroes of the red standard.
Go forth and trail the insulting crescent
In the dust, and the world stands your debtor.

DURHL. My liege, I burn to lead your legions there ;
And if I do not chase these Moslems
From the sacred tomb, then am I no Norman.

Enter WILFRED, and FILINA (in mourning).

WILFRED. Nay, lady, be not alarmed,
Your personal safety here runs no risk ;
Gaslie is e'en a gentler man than fame proclaims.

FILINA. Loathing clogs my steps, not fear.
He may be gentle, yet his advent
Was most rude and violent. *(aside)*
Sire a Calanth waits at your footstool !

DUKE. Lady, I am bravely paged, with your beauty
In my train. My commands were—

Enter MORCA, dressed as a page.

FILINA. There is the consummation of one.
His future path is on thy lean shadow ;
Would the sight could blind thee !

DUKE. As a woman you are a privileged
Combatant in the wordy war of tongues.
Yet have care, silence least provokes our anger ;
Once moved, our displeasure knows no limit.
(To Morca) The wheel has turned, sir, since I was the
butt

Of your princely jests ; thy eyeless head
Bears witness to my keen remembrance.
That policy that in Godfrey banished me

Suggested thy degradation.
Your father gave me a well-remembered
Lesson in courtly craft and diplomacy.
It taught me to maim, rather than kill—
To cover hatred with a smiling face.
Henceforth the page's wand is the sign
Of thy courtly office and destiny.
Forget the blast that summons war from his lair,
To revel in conflict with death;
Banish from your dreaming ambition
The bloodstained wreaths of fame and conquest;
Drape your sword and knightly spurs in mourning,
For never shall eye see, or tongue shall tell,
Their feats in thy heroic enterprize.
The aspiring hand that grasped a sceptre,
Now bears a train!

MORCA. 'Tis the Duke of Normandy that speaks:
I am silent.

WILFRED. The hawk stoops to strike!

DUKE. Durhl and Caffa, prepare your hardy troops,
These Crusades call for instant action.
Beneath the lion banner of Richard,
Ye shall prove the might of Norman arms.
Go forth as Knights of the Cross! Invincible
In fight, spotless in honor, deathless in faith!
Chivalrous sons of liberty, never

Sheathe your swords while truth needs a champion.
Mother Church has a rebel son to chide,
And calls her rod, Normandy, to the task,
Whose willing hand grasps at that enterprise.
What says Sir Wilfred?

WILFRED. Your wishes are commands, sire.
I'll see them obeyed.

DUKE. 'Tis well. We will further instruct thee.
(*Rising*) Knights, see that your enterprise sleep not;
Speed and decision are your passwords to fame.
Lady, come with us; your duties, at first,
Shall be light, and befitting your beauty.

Exit with FILINA, CAFFA, DURHL, and SOLDIERS.

WILFRED. Peste! I do not like that!
How beautiful her sadness hung upon her.
I know not why, yet, by my soul, 'tis truth,
The sight of beauty always makes me sad.
When I last saw her, she was but a rosebud,
Now, she is a match for Odin himself.

(*To Morca*) The Duke seems gracious to your sister.

MORCA. She is his page! Smiles are light rewards.

WILFRED. His face belied his thoughts, or he to her
Would fain have played the page! Should he love her,
What will your wrongs say to that?

MORCA. My weeping soul would shout for very joy.
You could not pick from the army of words,

A sentence fraught with such music as that.
Love her! Oh, repeat, repeat it!

WILFRED. Then, by heavens, I mistook you.
I thought I spied in your sullen silence,
In the strange working of your face and brow,
The soldier's hope—Revenge. Till now, Morca,
A secret hope whispered that the time was coming,
When my sword, arm, ay, my life, should serve
The valiant race of Rollo's heroic sons.
Alas! the last of the Calanths sleeps with the dead!

MORCA. Lives! to slay the robber of his honor!
Lives, to write in blood the tale of his revenge!
Lives, maimed, outraged, ay, and blind, blind!
Yet without one dot of fear in his soul,
Or flaw in his heart's enterprise. O, Knight,
Could you but feel the denseness of my heart,
You would pity Gaslie de Byrne.
Let him love her—he steps into my power.

WILFRED. That was an echo of Rollo's own
voice;
And the blood of heroes still moves in thee!
Yet trust not too much to woman's faith;
Unlike man she cannot let her warm heart
Be guided by her brain; she acts first,
And reflects afterward. If Gaslie loves,
He may pluck her for his bride, and then—

MORCA. Gaslie's bride! away with the fetid thought!
She should prostitute to a white leper,
Marry a dead slave, to-bed with death,
Ere she should dally with such a viper!
Ah, do not mock me with such hideous dreams;
The chance of that thought does not exist.
But softly, my truant tongue runs too fast.
How comes it that Sir Wilfred cares so much,
Who wears the pretty flower Filina?

WILFRED. Believe me, her face is no stranger
To my thoughts. Such beauty is not soon forgotten!
Again—I like not his attentions to her—
I'll go ask what mission he hath for me. *Exit.*

MORCA. Dame Fortune is prodigal to me yet;
I am dull or Wilfred loves my sister.
Oh, heaven, grant me that desired bounty,
And shed a light upon my misery.
From olden time his race have served my name,
And could I but bind him to my cause,
I am terribly armed! Hark! footsteps coming!
Noise is my only messenger.

Enter JAHLO and MAUD.

JAHLO. You are in the teens of simplicity, this side
the twentys of experience. Innocence in a court, and
folly at a funeral, are well matched. Behold a judge!

(*pointing to Morca*) hand him a sword, and scales, and justice stands personified.

MAUD. 'Tis lord Morca.

IAHLO. Nay, 'tis the page, looking for his eyesight which has fled to his ears; the surest vision, as Eve proved.

MAUD. My lord, here are some pretty flowers I plucked for thee; their pearly petals are wet With perfumed tears, shed for thy misfortune! Thou canst not see them, yet their sweet incense Shall bathe thy mutilated face in joy! And the tiny fairies sleeping 'Neath their leaves, shall breathe of hope And beauty. Take them, my lord, they are Maud's Only riches.

MORCA. Flowers! Thy beauty mocks me! Thy fragrance
Steals across my face, like sunshine upon the dead!
To *me* the nettle's as bright in radiance
As the lily, rose, or pouting tulip!
Save in perfume, the rank, ungainly weed
Is a violet to me. Ah, who will tell
The horror of lost, lost beauty!

IAHLO. I shall think the better of my eyes, as long as I live; I never knew till now, what jewels my eye-

lids cover. Page, hast heard the news? The Duke has conferred a favor on thee.

MORCA. Ah. What favor, good Jahlo?

JAHLO. No less an one than myself, who am, for the future, your companion in eyes, not arms. You may use my optics, and I will take umbrage beneath your wisdom. Henceforth, see with the eyes of a fool, and I defy a German philosopher to prove that will not be sharply!

MORCA. Why a German philosopher, Jahlo; are there no Norman ones?

JAHLO. No, they are all pirates and thieves. I am an unlucky instance of the French character; one half of me is pure fool, the other half of me tries to reason others in the same predicament. Now, your Germanism-hunter loves a metaphysical nothing to build a mysterious something on. Whenever a man pokes you with big terms, and spatters you with long logical phrases, be sure he is covering ignorance with pedantry, and lies with long-winded latin. I speak truth nettly. Two minutes ago, I told the Duke, he had not cut his wise teeth yet. How, fool? roared he. Simply, I replied, because you have clipt the eagle's wings, and left untouched the claws, that one day might tear off your coronet. The ignoramus grew angry, and bade me not insult his ears with such trash, but come to

thee, and crack my jokes on your misery. Now, the two of us will make a big man. I have observing eyes, and you ears, which are not as large as mules', yet wide enough to receive hints: one of which take as a proof of my scrutiny. The Duke has his eyes on your sister.

MORCA. A common occurrence, fool.

JAHLO. True, to all except a blind man. You, perhaps, are not familiar to the meaning of looks. I am.

MORCA. And how would you interpret his glances.

JAHLO. As pure covetous one. His eyes clung to her face with all the tenacity of a magnetic needle to the north.

MORCA. Say, rather, the fatal attraction of the moth to the flame.

Dost know, Jahlo, that David with a pebble
Slew a giant?

JAHLO. True, but he *saw* where to aim.

MORCA. Good! thou shalt guide my hand when I
take aim,

For thou knowest his vulnerable part.

Come with me to his presence, and let your eyes

Note his motions, as my ears will his voice.

Let naught escape—life is made of trifles.

(To MAUD) Sweet child, take these gems to my father's
tomb;

They'll become his grave better than my hand.
Decked with such garlands as these, the cold wind
Will pass with light feet his dank resting-place.

SCENE II.—*Passage in the castle. Enter MANUS, disguised as a monk.*

MANUS. The frowning skies portend the coming
storm

No surer, than the Duke's brow my impeachment.

With valor's better part must I meet him,

Or my life's not worth a Frenchman's oath!

Zounds! there's no breathing near this usurper:

He views with a deadly eye the friends

Of the fallen Duke; and fate favors him,

He'll send us to keep dead Godfrey company.

The Benedictines owe me many obligations,

For rich gifts and protection in past times;

I will now acquit them of the debt,

By using their guise and secret passages,

That I may safely watch the crafty Duke,

And warn Morca of the stealthy step

Pursuing him with destruction. [retires.

CAFFA. (*without*) Albert! Albert, I say!

(*Enter CAFFA, armed cap-a-pie.*)

CAFFA. Quick, boy! bring hither my trusty Galand,

My lance and shield. Come briskly, thou!

(*Enter ALBERT, the squire.*)

ALBERT. Here, my lord.

The troops have gathered, well mounted and armed.
Caen ne'er saw such a brilliant cavalcade ;
It looks like a sea of burnished steel.

CAFFA. — Humph ! Give me my fancy. (*takes his sword.*)
Gods ! thou art as pretty a piece of steel
As ever flashed in mortal conflict ;
Firm as fate, yet pliant as fortune.
Old friend, you bear your age with grim content ;
Your keen edge bristles with scars of honor,
Every one of them a tale of death.
Good comrade, you and I must once more
Face the breach, lead the crushing onslaught,
And circle with terror Normandy's ensign !
Didst ever read, Albert,—'tis said thou canst,—
Of these Paynims ?

ALBERT. Never, my lord,
But yon monk may tell—they pilgrim there.
In truth, 'tis a monk that raised the crusades ;
'T were well, perhaps, to ask his blessing.

CAFFA. An it would put a ducat in your pouch,
I'd say, aye ; if it would parry a lance,
Or turn from its path the barb'd arrow,
Each troop would be well armed that bore a monk
As the ensign of deathless victory.

But a saber will spill more blood in a moment,
Than a blessing could stop in eternity.
Away, and hold in stirrup'd readiness
My black comrade of victory, my horse. [*Exit* ALBERT.
'Twill be brave work, fighting these naked hounds;
Well for them if their turbans are proof
Against my sword. Spoils in plenty. Humph!
Women, too, by the mass! [*Exit.*

MANUS. (*coming forward*) Accoutred and armed for
war,
Steel clad and venom-fanged for contest;
For the horrid blood marshes of strife,
Burnished as brightly as the sun entering
His crystal palace in the icy sea.
War! I fear that time will never kill thee!
Thy chariot wheels will roll while man lives;
No mortal hand shall write thy epitaph!

SCENE III.—*Room in the palace. The DUKE seated, FILINA
before him.*

DUKE. You are silent; not even an angry word,
To hurl at the head that crushed your fortune.
O, give your passion vent—I am tongue-proof!

FILINA. Sire, you are more, you are honor and pity
proof,

Or I had never stood weeping here,
A footstool for your cruel insults.
But the great Reckoner will brook no crime,
No, not even from a Duke! The day is coming,
When that haughty brow shall lower in terror.

DUKE. That angry flash did thy beauty honor:
Go on, spare me not; I could bask forever
In such a halo of brilliant glances.

FILINA. Truly, sir, you play the conqueror well,
The Roman Cæsars live again in you:
Not only do princes draw your chariot,
But woman, too, must swell the triumphal train!
Gods! such prowess stands unmatched for ages.
My duties, say you, shall be light. Gods, hear that!
Was ever woman honored so before!
Shall I fan from your face the summer's heat—
Soften the tyrant dreams with sad music—
Lave the red brows, hot from dissipation—
And compose a bacchanalian chorus
For the age's hero, our Danish Duke?

DUKE. Softly, my angry queen; you step too near
The floodgates of our anger—there is danger!
(*Rising*) You have never heard the tale of my wrongs,
My rebellion, revenge, and triumph.
Listen, then. I am a son of bold Debrun,
And first drew warrior's blood at Hastings.

I've passed from boy to man i' the soldiers' camp;
Glaives and shields were my toys of infancy,
War-songs were my books, strife my ambition,
And death my first achievement.
Like a weed upon the battlefield,
I have shot up from a soil rich with blood.
I left my native land and joined the Normans,
Then world-renowned in war. For many years
I led their legions: English, French, and Flemish,
Have each lowered their banners to our swords.
Suddenly the tempest ceased, and peace held sway.
Wounded and weary, I came to Normandy,
To rest on the fame so dearly bought, so truly won.
But there was neither balm for my wounds,
Smiles for my welcome, nor rest for my bones.
We stood like beggars at a rich man's gate,
For envy had crept into Godfrey's heart—
His luxurious state dreaded the soldier's return.
He loved the marshal array of soldiers
On the battle-field, but not near his court.
My feet trod too roughly the palace floor,
My voice was harsh, my manners uncourtly,
My speech rude, and—memory of the brave!—
My very scars were objects of disgust!
Nor was this all. Godfrey must deck his son's brows
With our laurels; for this he formed the heroes

Of a hundred fights, his gray-beard warriors,
Into a body-guard for his boy prince !
We refused—he banished us ; we rose up,
And hurled him from his throne of vain glory !
All is told. Morca owes his degradation
To a hint from Godfrey's policy ;
He can never menace my ducal march !

FILINA. Forsooth, your vanity must feel flattered
By such a bragging trumpeter !
O, for a charm to silence such lying lips !

DUKE. I'll show thee a charm, Lady, if that tongue
Speaks often in such a scurvy strain.
Henceforth my shadow limits your freedom,
For I will rule supreme, in spite of death.

FILINA. Death ! Boaster, his dart may now be
aimed at thee !
You have in conqueror's tones dilated
On your triumph ; now hear a woman prophesy
Your future :—The ducal chair is yours, true,
But, to keep it, you shall live in horrors
That would have turned Prometheus to stone !
The purchase was blood, and the heritage
Shall be sudden death ! Tyrant, your whole life
Shall be one long dread of the assassin !
In the camp, your plumed casque shall point the spear ;
At home, where poison will lurk in the cup ;

On your couch, where night shall veil the hand,
And sleep muffles the step, that rides Normandy
Of an usurper! Henceforth, the cheek
That war could not blanch, shall pale at a whisper;
The hero of strife and mortal conflict,
Shall tremble at the shadow of a Page!

DUKE. The lion lives in his whelps!
Lady, scan well my grim visage, and see
If cowardice lurks in a feature,
Fear in my eyes, fickleness in my mouth,
Or resolution wanting in my face.
Not a line there but gives death to my foes.
Take care; the chivalry of Europe
Could not stay my hand from striking that mouth,
That dared to slander or annoy me.
When walking near a precipice, a dread
Loads the mind, for fear of a false step:
I am the abyss to thy wandering feet;
Be wary, a misstep brings destruction!

(Enter hurriedly SIR WILFRED.)

How now, sir!
Is this a courtyard for public inspect?

WILFRED. Sire, when speaking of my future mission,
You said you had other information
To give me on't. I would know its import.

DUKE. Dost remember the pay of meddlers?

'Tis no matter, it will not help you much.
 You can go; I will appoint the next meeting.
 Stay—take away this lady.

Exeunt FILINA and WILFRED.

DUKE. Beautiful, when lit up with anger!
 If she were not a Godfrey, or I a Byrne,—
 No matter. Humph!
 She would become my palace most queenly.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Room in the palace.* MORCA and WILFRED
conversing. FILINA seated apart.

MORCA. Bold enough, but not likely to succeed.
 Let us be wary; we are but moles,
 To this mountain of usurpation!
 O, fate! fate! drive away this darkness from me—
 Let me have light; this pall is killing me!
 Blind! Why, I cannot realise my doom.
 Of a night, memory visits my dreams
 With sunny landscapes radiant with light,
 Seas and rivers effulgent from the moon:
 All is glittering with the rainhow's hues,
 'Till the sunbeams, playing on my face,

Summon me to rise and greet the day-god :
Half 'shamed, in eager haste I leave my couch,
Run to my lattice, and find—I'm blind !

While he that placed this sorry crown upon me,
Smiles at my silent agony !

Well ! events take place and are forgotten,
Terrible things are done, yet time still passes.

The earth would not quake, though Gaslie should die !

FILINA, (*starting*) Die ! Who says Gaslie shall die ?

MORCA. I, my musing sister.

FILINA. (*rising*) Pardon me, Morca ; I was dreaming,
When your angry voice confused my thoughts,
And I mistook their import.

WILFRED. (*apart*) Ever musing ; there's something
strange in that :

The object's near and dear, if one may judge
By that air and face.

She started at the sound of Gaslie's name,
And seemed to blush at her own thoughts.

I have noted how he hath subdued her :

No angry speeches now at his approach,
But tears, sighs, and trembling silence.

See how his very name mantles her face
In blushes.

MORCA. Dreaming were you, Filina ? and of what ?
In souls we are twins ; our thoughts aim at one end ;

Misfortune cements our hearts in firmer love
Than mere consanguinity of blood.
Yet, sister, methinks it has sadly changed thee.
I cannot see your face, but I hear you ;
The lingering step, the discordant voice,
The stifled sigh, the abrupt speech and silence,—
All expression of a gnawing sorrow.
My kisses oft meet falling tears !
Give me thy hand—you do not waver ;
This sad bearing hints no change of purpose ?
Holy Edgar ! there's no forget in thee !
Nay, turn not away ; dream on, good sister,
But let each thought be for retribution ;
Muse, but it must be of speedy revenge !

FILINA. Can I be gay, while on my soul there hangs
The destiny of a murderer ?
I cannot laugh, steeped as I am in cares ;
Grief has closed forever my well of mirth.
Heed it not, Morca ; when the time comes,
I shall be found at my post.

MORCA. I knew it. Come kiss me, sweet. (*kisses her.*)
How cold and firm is her manner !
Beneath that mask she hides our enterprize. (*aside.*)

Enter JAHLO.

JAHLO. Dispatches to be despatched, but where are
the despatchers ? Here are three, despatching their

own business, instead of the Duke's. Truly, Page, you are a plague to the Duke: he is as hoarse as a drunken sailor, shouting for thee. He met me but now i' the hall. Fellow, said he, go find my page. Please my Lord Duke, answered I, you had better fulfill the scriptural law. What law? quoth he. Why, tie him to your spurs, and let the blind lead the blind. We are especial favorites; you are the court's victim, and I its fool. Gads! we are men of mark!

MORCA. Boy, the time is past, when your jests drew smiles

And laughter on my face; my mourning weeds
Drape too freely my soul. These trifles move me not!
Away, you have no claim upon me now.

JAHLO. Truly, not so much as you have on me, when crossing a bridge. Yet, page, extremes assimilate. A penny whistle accords admirably with a bass drum; so there can be no question as to the harmony our souls produce.

FILINA. Confess, Jahlo, your's is a poor pastime, Ever burlesquing life's accidents.
Surely there is not much that's flattering
In the escutcheon of a court buffoon!

JAHLO. Nay, you err, lady. There is more power in the buffoon's bow, with its shafts of folly, than in a deadly volley from Harold's famed archers. The

surgeon lives not, that can extract the barbed dart of ridicule! You are dull, or your judgment would have detected a nation's greatness, by its possessal of a court, and inside it a fool! Why, it is the proof of the age's civilization, that intelligent countries keep a court-puppet. Look at England and France, a king is a nation's pet folly, so am I, with this difference: Ridicule is my acknowledged robe of state, and, instead of ducats of human blood, a laugh is the heaviest tax I levy!

MORCA. True, Iahlo, you speak profoundly.
I remember my father once said,
That your words were like Egyptian figures,
Each quaint symbol hid a strange meaning.

JAHLO. O, I am a speaking ass, and you are the Balaam, for I see in your path an armed figure, bidding thee turn back. Come, and I will show thee a by-path out of reach of its sword. *Exeunt.*

WILFRED. The time is propitious, we are alone,
I will e'en cast a grapnel for the prize. (*aside.*)
Filina, I've a long hid secret for thee,
Thy misfortunes make me bold to divulge it;
If thou but smil'st upon it I'm a king.
I know not the scholar's polished phrases,
Nor the poet's passion-play of language;
I'm an unlettered soldier—my story

Is, I love thee. Oh, how feebly that word
Tells the giant passion I feel for thee.
But as life means years of cares mixed with joys,
So love leaves untold its countless heart-throbs.
Thou hast stolen the soldier's glory-wreath,
And placed a brow of beauty there.
I have no eyes, save for thy pensive face,
No ears but for the music of thy voice;
Thou art the long sought laurel of my hopes:
By my knighthood, I would not give thy face
For the crowns and titles of fifty kings.

FILINA. Art mad, sir knight, to speak to me of love;
To *me*, with a dishonored name; to *me*,
Who am a sworn murderess!
The sole aim and duty of my life, is blood;
Gaslie's death, strike him sleeping or waking,
At prayer, or revels, is my redemption!
Oh, Morca, that fatal vow will drive me mad!

WILFRED. By the cross!
Say but the word, your dreaded oath is mine.
Stand not aghast at me, but give the nod,
And this very hour my dagger's point
Shall rid Normandy of the usurper!

FILINA. And my lips would curse the hand that
did it.
No, stain not your glaive with such a blot,

For I should hate, ay! loathe the sight of thee!
Within this play of life there are strange scenes;
Our passions make us terrible actors,
Moved by unseen hands to unknown ends!
Knight, forgive my strangeness, forget thy love,
Pity my weakness, my infirm purpose;
Yet, whatever you think, let your tongue be silent.
Time is the only guide to revelation.
Farewell! my path lies near a precipice,
Each step reveals the lurking danger! *Exit.*

WILFRED. My suspicion stands half verified;
She loves him; and that storm of tears and words
Was the conflict 'twixt her head and heart!
One may prophecy which will conquer.
Morca must know this, and snatch her away,
Ere she falls inevitably!

SCENE II.—*Antechamber in the palace.*

Enter FILINA.

FILINA. Oh, that I could leap a hundred years!
Or flee to some city of refuge,
At whose open portal death kept no guard!
Goes to the window.
Oh, night! thou swarthy shadow of the grave,
I was born beneath thy gloomy scepter.

In thy frowning features may I read
My destiny—a black flood drowning my light!
Why was I born a Calanth in name only;
Why does my fickle heart run counter
To the blood that fills its wandering veins?
Why am I stamped, like Cain, coward, blood deep!
In the solemn hour of death take an oath,
And perjure it ere the echos faint!
In vain my lips and thoughts tutor my heart,
And bid it fix its iron purpose
In the destruction of the usurper;
Not e'en the murder of a fond father,
A brother's blindness, a dishonored name,
The servile yoke of page to a villain,
Can madden my heart to hate, rather than love!
Would I had been blind, and ne'er had seen him!
Love Gaslie! Why, 'tis as I should love
A pestilence, that kills all it gazes on!
O, 'tis fearful to know duty's path,
And yet some blinding passion hold thee back.
'Tis true, his face and mien are nobly stamped,
Dignity in his step, pride in his eye,
And the courage of a lion in 's heart!
Cruel if he hates, most gentle where he loves,
What he wills he takes, and you are the giver.

Enter MANUS, unperceived.

How shall I hide the secret from Morca?
If he knew it 't would turn his blood to gall;
He would kill me with a curse!
My father's mane would rise at the dread news,
And tear me to pieces.
Methinks it steals upon me now, its hair
And shroud mantled with the dust of the grave,
Its eyes full of reproach and wild terror,
While from its pinched lips and hollow jaws
Come shrieks of—Traitress! Mercy! O, spare me!
Sees MANUS, and falls.

MANUS. Peace, daughter. *(raises her up.)*
Your father's shade sleeps quiet in his tomb;
Fear thine own conscience, not his spirit!
Secrets are, like much riches, cares to the keeper.
Tell me thy sorrows; I'll bring thee to One
Who never hears unheeded Mercy's call!

FILINA. Pardon me, father. A distempered fancy
Hath thus disturbed my senses: nothing more.
Heed not my ravings, they bear no import;
These sudden shocks make my tongue talk strangely!

MANUS. Not too strange to be true, child.
If some lurking danger haunts thy footsteps,
Fly from it; I will bring thee to a refuge
Where not e'en Gaslie could find thee!

Trumpet sounds.

Hark! that blast tells the revel is o'er. Come,
The Duke will soon pass here; we must be gone.
Bear up heart! A hundred years from hence,
Its sorrows will be a dream of the past! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*Hall of statues, with gallery above. Statues of Morca's ancestors placed around. In the center a pedestal.*

Enter WILFRED and MORCA.

MORCA. Indeed! But that my grief forbids,
I could fairly laugh at such suspicions!
You are but poorly versed in motives,
And read askant the book of nature.
I know her heart too well to think she'll foster
Cowardice; it is not in the blood, knight.
A woman oft shields her love with silence.
How did she receive your suit?

WILFRED. Burst into a storm of tears
And exclamations, charged me not to speak,
And held her oath as cause of denial.

MORCA. 'Tis even as I said,
The work of retribution bears her down,
Saps up the youthful tide of fervent love,
And on the fresh brow of youth and beauty,
Plants the icy chaplet of sorrow.

WILFRED. When e'en I proffered Gaslie's death at
my hand,
She started like a fawn at the hunter's step,
Terror in every feature.

MORCA. What then? Take a child and thrust it
face to face,
With that grinning skeleton of the tomb,
Will 't smile at that inevitable horror?
No, when misfortune strikes us in the spring,
The fatal crook of our lives is ineffaceable.

WILFRED. Why this procrastination, Morca?
Circumstances will never give fitter time,
Or opportunity find fairer place than now.

MORCA. Wait, wait.
Patience is a virtue blindness taught me;
My hand is on fortune's wheel, I can feel,
When my hour of triumph is at hand.

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT. My lord Wilfred, here are despatches
From the Duke. He bids thee quick speed. [*Exit.*]

WILFRED. Ha! As untimely as sickness. (*reads*)
Fierce Hildebrand is at the heretics,
Tickling them with sword and fire. His tiara
Should be a vulture's beak, for he loves blood!
This fighting pope keeps our soldiers busy.
Morca, war will part us for a time,

Yet in my absence let your heart not droop;
When the hour to strike is come, send this cross
To me, and I'll be here ere it is cold
From the messenger's hand. For your sister
I've few hopes; I will place her remembrance
Among the sad yet sacred gems of my heart!
Now, Mars, raise thy serpent crest in the East,
A pillar of terror to guide my sword:
Arm me with thy appalling glance, for ere
The sun has scorched again thy ripening corn,
Earth shall reek with red incense to thee!

MORCA. Alas! that is a track I shall ne'er tread;
In the annals of war I'm a cipher.
Farewell! the laurel of conquest be thine.
Stay, tell me, where is the sun?

WILFRED. On the meridian.

MORCA. Henceforth 't is on the wane.
Knight, my sun will soon be set forever!

WILFRED. May happiness yet soften thy pillow. [*Exit.*]

MORCA. (*solus*) My staffs fall beneath my touch;
All support or aid flies at my approach!
E'en the world has thrust me from its sympathies;
Ay, and God has turned his back upon me!
My heart has yearned for the love of my race,
And been chilled with their scorn—like a cloudlet
Smiling in the sun's face, who with a flash

Rains it down, down into a chasm!
Sometimes I catch the buzz of the millions,
Laughing, joyous, bright, and full of music;
To *my* outstretched hands there comes no succor;
To *my* brain no light, to *my* heart no love!
Before I died (for this blindness is death),
The earth was to me a wondrous land;
The elements, one and all, were brave spirits,
That met me on the moor and in the valley's glade,
Telling me strange tales of nature and her ways.
I have shouted at the rude storm, and laughed
Like a child at the wind's hustling tricks.
Beautiful nature was a mirror
To my actions. Her meadows taught me peace,
Her seasons beauty, her mountains sublimity,
Her blustering storms anger, and her sad,
Soothing eves contemplation and love.
The bud of spring, and the winter's dead leaf,
Were the monitors of eternity.
They are all gone, all fled — fled forever!
This hall of statued marble must find a niche
For me; their cold busts are not heavier
Than this bleeding heart of mine! (*feels the statues.*)
This is Baudoin, the terror of princes;
Lightning-like he struck naught but the highest,
His life was one hurricane of battle!

Here is Hugue, who fell in his maiden fight.
This is Grenard, the chivalrous pirate;
Love and adventure were his laurel leaves;
Wear them in peace, thou scourge of the sea!
Ha! here's a pedestal without its hero:
A laurel for a soldier ne'er returned,
A kingdom of fame for a stillborn prince!
Gods! this was for me; this polished shaft
Was to tell my lustrous deeds to ages!
And now—it prophecies my future blank!
Then let the living represent the dead.

(mounts the shaft)

If 't were not for my beating heart, all here
Were stone statues.

Door opens in the gallery, DUKE and FILINA appear.

DUKE. Why, what a fragile thing thou art!
There, the coolness of this gloomy hall
Will perhaps revive thy fading spirits.
Weep no more. Chide! I love to hear thee chide.

FILINA. Ah, you little think what a guilty soul
I bear; my lips have told my love for thee,
But not the vow that gnaws into my heart.
Tell me, what says your stern philosophy
To a perjured woman, who violates
The most sacred of oaths?

MORCA. Death!

FILINA. What voice was that? Did'st thou hear it
Gaslie?

It came like a knell from the other world.

DUKE. Cease your fears; it was but an echo.
All beneath is silent and deserted.

I'm the philosophy between thee and fear;
Housed in my love, Europe combined in arms
Could not tear thee from me; my life is your shield,
My very name shall be your body-guard.
But this vow, whose cords lacerate your heart;
Give me the tenor on't, and I'll dissolve it
With a breath!

FILINA. By thy love and constancy, speak of it
No more; I'll bury it in silence and tears.
O, let us enjoy the present; who knows
When the angel of sorrow may touch us?
When the hand is upon us, why *then* lament.
Wilt ever love me Gaslie?

DUKE. As faithfully as the seas follow the moon.

FILINA. I shall banish frowns from thy heavy brows,
And angry sparks from thy flashing eyes;
Thou wilt never leave me, no, not for war.
Ah, you scarce know at what a sad venture
I set my life and hopes. You dream not
At what a price I dare to love thee!

DUKE. I'll value it at its richest worth.

I would rather lose my coronet than thee!

MORCA. Thou shalt lose both!

DUKE. Thy possession brings me to the zenith
Of my ambition—the goblet is full.

But come, the air is chilling, and tell me your fears.

Exit.

MORCA. (*leaping from the pedestal*) Traitress! damned
Traitress! (*falls.*)

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The same.* MORCA *lying at the base of the pedestal.*

Enter JAHLO.

JAHLO. (*solus*) Of all the humiliating positions found in the calendar of life, there is none more pitiable than a fool out of court favor. He is the broken toy, the cast-away crust of a toothless prince—a hobby-horse with a broken back. The time was when my shadow opened all doors—when my driest saying was a joke for dukes to crack their sides over; now I am like an undertaker at a wedding—my very gravity is an insult. Out of tune, I am out of tune! Let me catch the spirit of the age; my folly is a jade galled

and broken. Give me a staff and robe, that I may hide my stale wit beneath the garb, and lean my wisdom on the staff, of a philosopher. (*sees MORCA*) Why, my madcap Page, you have gone early to your couch. He mistook the silence for night, and laid himself down among his ancestors. There's a crack for my philosophy! For look you, Death is with us half our lives; every night we practise his repose, till at last, as the gulf drags down a sinking ship, so death draws us through the deepest of sleeps to the sands of eternity. Morca! Prince! Page! the sun is in the west: up and salute him!

MORCA. (*starting to his feet*) He shall not have her! By the red cross, I'll pluck them asunder, Though legions of devils guarded the chamber! She is a traitress! a liar!

JAHLO. Mad! mad as a windmill! To be blind and then run mad, is worse than hanging a culprit with a sore throat. Don't roar so loud, good Page, or the Duke's anger will find thee a quick cure: a blow from his falchion will kill three men—a blind man, a madman, and a page. Come, sir, be cool, and tell me your grief in a whisper.

MORCA. Ah! is it thou, Jahlo? A vicious dream hath almost distraught me; Shadows have fooled my senses till they rave.

JAHLO. Dreams, comrade, are the brain's recreations, and truly they cut rare pranks. They are our desires, booted, spurred, and mounted with invincibility, with a charter that no circumstance can clog; consequently, your villains are turbid dreamers. Try them by my philosophy.

MORCA. O, Fate, how have I fallen,
When my very blood turns traitor to my wrongs
I've heard it said that Fortune tramples
On the down; 'tis so with me. Those I love,
Rise and hurl stones upon my misery.
O, impotent, imbecile that I am,
I could beat my brains out for very shame!
Yet stay; Grief, be thou silent forever!
As Sampson put forth his last revenging strength,
So I'll gird myself for one desperate leap,
To dash like a venomed dart at his heart,
And perish in the death-wound.
Come, Fool, there is game afoot, rich game;
One more shot, and then we will hear your jests,
Ay, and laugh at them too.

JAHLO. I cry you mercy, I am nearly done; my wit, like beer, has been flattened with exposure to the air. I am with you in philosophy, but I am too poor to be merry.

MORCA. But lead me to my sister's chamber,

And I will give you a riddle to solve
That shall tax your brains worse than my dagger.
O that I could bid the sun stand !

JAHLO. Or I stop the flow of waters ; for every tide
brings me a gray hair, which, like dead leaves, presage
the coming frost. *Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Chamber.* FILINA *kneeling before a cross.*

FILINA. O, thou mystic emblem of death and hope,
Type of suffering and redemption,
Dread index of the future, look down upon me !
Loadstar of nations, token of sweet peace,
Shed, I beseech thee, balm upon my wounds !
Thou art found at the martyr's red stake,
In poverty's hut, on the palace wall,
At the patriot's grave, and in the cell of despair !
Thy beacon hath flouted the clouds, ay,
And hath sounded the depths of roaring seas ;
Every clime owns thee, all tongues worship thee !
Great talisman of hope ! ease, then, my soul ;
Drive back that terrible duty from my path,
And give me courage to drink in silence
The dregs my luckless hand bears to my lips.

(Enter MORCA, slowly.)

He comes ; a strange voice whispers, Danger ! danger !

MORCA. I feel her presence and her faithlessness :

I feel the chill of her dead love already !
Stand aloof, O shades of the departed,
While I impale her traitorship !
Sister ! Filina ! where art thou ?

FILINA. (*rising*) Here, Brother, I am here.

MORCA. Art thou ? How now, is that your greeting ?
Where is the caress, the kiss of yesterday ?
Art silent ? What change is this, *good* sister ?
Let me hear why this coldness.

FILINA. Believe me, there is none :
My love for thee can never change.

MORCA. Then why this lukewarmness, *faithful* sister ?
Where are now the cheering words that ministered
To my grief, love's embraces, and sympathy ?
What cloud in my misfortune hath hid them ?
Give me thy hand ; come closer to me.
For whom was that sigh ?

FILINA. For thee, Brother.

MORCA. Liar ! 't was for Gaslie !
This palm is yet warm from his loathed pressing ;
And the lips that vowed his death, bear yet the taint
Of his polluting kisses ! Thou—O, memory !—
Thou hast so forgot thy blood and nature,
Hast sunk so low in the mire of infamy
As to love, ay, love this ruffian ! He, the wolf,
That struck me blind, and thy father dead !

The desecrator of our home and hopes—
The ban that stung and maimed a Rollo!
And *thou* to love him! O, thou art blacker
Than Cain, deeper damned than Judas.

FILINA. Brother, have mercy, I beseech thee,
Do not curse me yet; let me be heard.
Nay, spurn me not. O, do not thrust me away!
By the sacred memory of our mother,
I entreat thee to hear, e'er you condemn.
O, let thy old love plead for me, this once,
Though it spurns me forever afterward.

MORCA. Go on, I'll listen.
Be calm, my soul, be calm!

FILINA. Brother, measure me not by your stern code,
For though a Calanth, I am still a woman!
Let charity be the judge betwixt us.
I have not forgot the oath that links me
To thy terrible revenge! Brother,
I must perjure that vow, though the penalty
Was a death nameless for its horror!
A fatal power has dragged me to that man,
As the flame draws the fluttering moth.
He wooed me with haughty brow, and flashing eyes,
Scoffed at my fears, placed me at his side,
And dares the world to carry me away.
Yet with this he is noble and generous;

Yields to my lightest wish, anticipates
All wants, and grandly smiles down the sad care.
Ah, Morca! turn, turn I beseech thee,
From that path of blood—wake not up the past!

MORCA. Love, then, is the huge bar
That stands between thee and our revenge.
I, too, can tell a tale, but mark the end!
Not long ago, within the rapid flight
Of one little year—but an inch of time—
I met and loved the beautiful daughter
Of Ralph De Brent. She was one of beauty's
Sweetest flowers, pure in mind as fair in form;
So lovely, that e'en now the mere memory on't
Fills my soul with its melancholy fragrance.
Of one age, we hawked and rode together,
Roamed, talked, and read nature in sympathy;
Our lives ran in the music of harmony,
Till that weird hag, sorrow, trod upon me,
And froze the bud of love into dry leaves!
I mean, when I was maimed in sight and power,
As you now see me! But she came to me,
In my hour of agony, and soothed my woe
With tears, dropt the balm of love on my wounds,
And bade me live in spite of fortune.
But a strange hardness had crept into my heart,
I had to go forth and revenge my race;

I thrust aside her love, her tears, her sorrow,
And girding on my sword went forth alone;
I banished her name from my lips forever,
And buried her love death-deep in my heart!
For your honor I became a page to Gaslie,
And taught my foot stealth, my tongue duplicity—
And will you, for the soft dalliances
Of love, throw me aside like a broken toy?

FILINA. O, brother, not a word you utter,
But mantles my cheek with shame. Yet
Think of my task, and my recreant heart;
I cannot aid you in such a fierce scheme,
My brain whirls at the bare thought of such a deed.
Ask me to tear my heart out,
With my own nails mar this form of life,
But not to aid in Gaslie's death!

MORCA. Hear it not, ye shades of the past!
And this, Filina, is your inmost wish,
The earnest prayer of your life?

FILINA. O, brother, believe it.

MORCA. You *must* have the release
From your vow of revenge!

FILINA. Ay, or it will drive me mad!

MORCA. Then cast your eyes on heaven,

(draws his dagger)

For there is not a moment between thee and death.

Quick, then, with thy prayers for grace—quick! I
say;

Your soul will be on its way to heaven
Ere the first word hath reached the clouds.
Now, thou ribbed king of terror, ope thy portals,
Another subject for thy dominion!
Dost struggle, then perdition seize thee!

(stabs at her—she catches his hand)

FILINA. Stay, murderer! Oh, God, do not kill
me!

Surely this is some fiend in a brother's shape.

O, horror, horror! has it come to this?

Stand aside, thou blind assassin, and hear me!

This night, this very night, Gaslie shall die!

MORCA. So soon! go on sweet sister—
Thou art a lion when roused!

FILINA. And then we part forever,
Me to my grave, thou to a life of terror.
At every setting sun—hear it Fury—
Shall my phantom rise and reproach thee.
Farewell!

Exit.

MORCA. I've struck the rock, and blood flows at
the summons.

An' she keep her word, the promised end is nigh!

SCENE III.—*Courtyard of the Convent.**Enter JAHLO and MANUS.*

JAHLO. I say, he loves her and she loves him, and will stake a jest against your prayer, that I am good authority, though a fool. They both confessed, unwittingly, their feelings to me; the boy Cupid said aye, and I thought, amen. Mutual confessions showed both to be equal sinners, and they intend lumping them into one, by marrying.

MANUS. Faithless woman, recreant to such a cause! Does Morca know of this?

JAHLO. Yes, in good faith. They mistook him for a statue, and repeated the tale; but he couldn't, or he wouldn't say, amen! There will be more dancing at the Duke's wedding, than you will care to play to.

MANUS. Your fool's habit fits so closely
You cannot unshell for a moment.
Unfool yourself, sir.

JAHLO. I am, when you speak. I have as much right to my folly, as you to your monk's garb. It is my mission, my hobby. We are both fools: you belong to the solemn, and I to the ridiculous order. When we put our masks aside, the common skeleton of humanity will be found grinning beneath. But tell me, which is of the greatest importance, a principle, be

it religious or philosophical, or that mystic element which poor men, like me, call life?

MANUS. You are soon answered.

There is nothing in physics or philosophy,
So sacred as human life.

JAHLO. Indeed, then, your mother church is a butcher, for in the name of religion she has let out more life than the first acorn has produced trees. As a monk, sir, what is your mission or task?

MANUS. To warn the sons of men from worldly things,
To fit them for a higher and better world.

JAHLO. Take a fool's advice, and reverse your doctrine. The deeper the root delves, the higher shoot the branches; the foundation of the mountain peak is in the earth's core. What more earthy than a flower? and yet in beauty and worth it will outlast a thousand rainbows. You are as insipid as a string of beads.

MANUS. There is more craft than morality in you;
Your thoughts have some shrewd speculation,
And though a fool your vision is keen
For crooks of character, as flies' for sores.
Save your wit, Jahlo, and when dead
We will embalm you with it, for posterity.

JAHLO. Mercy, and few thanks. It will do as much for me as your prayers; neither will insure our skins

from the worms. Morca bade me give thee some news. He will visit thee to-night in the dead chapel.

MANUS. Ah! For what end?

JAHLO. Filina this night sends the Duke on an errand, the first step of which supports the proverb, for it is the greatest.

MANUS. No riddles, sir, speak plainer. What errand?

JAHLO. The errand of death! So, go pray for his safe passage. Should he meet, even in that stormless world, Godfrey's brother Baudoin, he will salute him, as forked lightning cleaves the cloud through which it passes.

MANUS. How will this agree with the tale of her love?

Will she kill her lover? You are in error, sir.

JAHLO. She has chosen the alternative between her own or Gaslie's death; the blind page has turned tiger and is panting for revenge.

MANUS. The fight begins now in sad earnest; Let Gaslie look well to his safe keeping.

His planted seeds are beginning to shoot,
He'll reap yet a dire crop of violence.

Be secret, and give this key to Morca,

It will ope the gate that leads to safety.

Farewell.

Exit.

JAHLO. I know where he means; 'tis in the dead-room, where dead priests, robed and full dressed, sit in perpetual council with silence and oblivion. A senseless mummary—we have no more right to the dead than to the unborn. It is a grim place, but to a blind man it may seem a fairy garden. Now, for my princely page.

SCENE IV.—*Chamber in the palace.*

DUKE *seated*, FILINA *on a footstool, near him.*

DUKE. So, Filina, the story goes,
But you are silent, and stare on vacancy.
Does the melancholy end thus bend your head,
And seam with thought that polished forehead?
You bring back a face that long has haunted me.
'Twas at Domfront, where we fought the Flemings,
On the eve succeeding the battle,
I found a damsel bent over a soldier,
Rent and bloody from the fatal conflict.
She spoke not, nor gave her anguish utterance,
But sat and gazed sternly at the sorrow.
Tears now and then slid down her pallid cheeks,
And fell like dew-drops upon the dead man's face.
Next morn I found her still the same—
Death had statued the poor weeping girl!

I never saw despair until then,
But you revive it in my memory.

FILINA. My weeping days, too, are passed. I can look
Sorrow in the face now, with a dry eye.
But the training has been terrible!

DUKE. Have done with those melancholy thoughts,
We should be merry, not sad.

Take a leaf from me, and never look back,
But march boldly into the future:

None but the wounded and lame loiter on the road.

Come, arouse, throw thy grief in the stream of time,
And light thy beauty by the torch of mirth!

Hand me the winecup, and I'll pledge my gem
Of Norman heroes above aught that lives. (*she rises*)

There shall be brave displays at our nuptials;

We will have dancing feet and jocund voices;

A king shall give me my bride, while dukes

In gold and silks shall make the day glitter!

Why, I will fetch — (*stops opposite the mirror, and sees*

FILINA *empty a paper in the winecup*)

FILINA. There, thou white messenger of death, (*apart*)

Spread thy venom through the grape's tempting blood;

Cover thy fatal sting with the foam of joy,

And work like death, who kills through sleep—one

touch —

No more.

O, life, why can this miserable dust
Destroy thee; how is't, that the meanest plant
Holds the germ of thy annihilation.
Back, back, thou terror-visaged consequence,
Look not forth—murder is in my right hand!
(*To the Duke*) My liege, here is the wine! The sight
on't

Hath sickened the cupbearer. Wilt drink?

DUKE. Stay, I have something to tell thee!
I had a dream last night—a strange, strange dream;
Listen, but remember, 't was only a dream.
Methought that here, in this very chamber,
We held sweet converse—as but now we did:
I thought that thou wast sad—as now thou art,
And that when I asked for the winecup—
Thy hand trembles, Filina; set it down, then,
If the weight unnerves thee.

FILINA. Nay, 'tis light, my liege! Yet in the scales
Of justice its consequence would outweigh
A quarter of the globe! (*aside.*) Go on!

DUKE. By accident I turned and saw *thee*,
My affianced bride, my prize of love—

FILINA. Heavens! my liege, let go my arm!
Why this terrible torture? what mystery,
In heaven's name, lies beneath this dream?
Finish, for I am sick at heart!

DUKE. 'Tis told, when I say I saw *thee*
Put poison in the cup! Ha! it moves you
Strangely. Terror hangs in drops upon thy brow,
In thy soul that dream finds reality!
Calm yourself, and obey me. Drink *thou* the wine!

FILINA. Destiny, thou art inconceivable!
Do you think I fear a cup of wine,
Though the destroyer lurked in the dregs?
No! Life with me has come to that pass,
That I could stoop to my grave, as I would
To my pillow! Gaslie, has't never thirsted
For oblivion? No? O, I have,
And here, here is the elixir!
Duke, if I die, bury me in the sea,
Where nothing human can reach my tomb!
Now lift the future—(*the bell tolls*)
He comes! he comes! armed and bloody!

(*She dashes down the goblet*)

O, hide me! save me! from that fury!

(*Clings to the Duke.*) (*Door opens, and MORCA appears.*)

MORCA. Is it done, sister? Did he die without a
groan?

FILINA. Away! not yet! Lost, lost! (*sinks down*)

MORCA. Not yet, then all is not well. *Exit.*

DUKE. Amazement at what I see, confounds me.
Filina, what does this mean? Is it possible!

Poison in my cup, and an assassin
At my chamber door ! Ere my blood blinds me,
Explain away that menace from my life,
Or my stirr'd anger will smite thee to death !

FILINA. O, I am the puppet of a cursed fate,
That toys with my heart's resolves,
And plunges me into actions I loathe !
If thou hast any claims to manhood,
With thy dagger wipe me from the scroll of life.
I am a sworn murderess, or else
A perjured, lying woman ! Strike, Gaslie,
For I have sworn to lure thee to destruction !
This very night, ay, this very moment,
But for my rebel heart, and infirm will,
Thy corse was to revenge my blind brother.

DUKE. This, then, is thy dreaded vow !
O, how black must be that soul, that fawns
Only to lure and destroy ! O, Filina,
I would have suffered a thousand deaths,
Ere I had learn't thy face hid such deceit !

FILINA. Stay, sir, culprit as I am, yet hear me.
Remember, you have usurped my rights,
Slain my father, blinded my brother,
And dishonor'd with the name of page,
The relics of the noble race of Rollo !
Where is the Norman that would not resent

Such outrages, ay, such cruelties !
In our first hour of anguish we swore thy fall,
But my frailty hath fall'n into the snare !
My love for thee waged war with my duty,
And I had fled from the terrible task,—
Till an enraged brother, with curses,
Ay, and threats, maddened me to this attempt !
It has failed, thank heaven, and at your feet,
A suppliant for death, I bow my head !
I have spoken, as my soul will one day speak,
Before that Judge whose eye brooks no deception !

DUKE. Rise, your words prove me guiltier than
thou !

True, thou hast been wronged, most foully wronged,
And when I look back upon the path I came,
I wonder how I 'scaped the avenging rod !
And Morca, blind, deposed, and dishonored !
With such a tiara of misery,
Who would not plot for secret vengeance !
Rise up ! If thou lovest me, as thou hast said,
By the dead shade of thy father, I'll repair
My injuries to thee and thine !

FILINA. Thou wilt ? Then there is hope for me yet !
O, Gaslie, thou hast snatched me from a fate,
The thought of which palsies me now with terror !
But, let what will come in the future,

Thy name shall be my barque of safety !
And Morca—what of him ?

DUKE. I will so extol him with state honors,
And so exalt him with my love and attention,
That his vow shall wither from his memory,
And his hatred of me shall leave but a scar—
One moment of pain, followed by years
Of peace and pleasure !

FILINA. As one plucked from some fearful danger,
So feel I ; and joy is so near to me,
That I scarce know myself.

DUKE. Put faith in me, and all shall be well.
A week from now we will ratify
Our vows of love at the holy altar !
The nuptial night I'll spend at thy father's tomb,
Instead of thy warm couch ; and there invoke,
In penitence, full pardon for the past.
Nay, fear not, his ghost can bring me no harm.
Now let us be merry, in good faith,
There is naught betwixt thee and happiness ! *Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Night. Exterior of a gothic chapel—through the stained windows streams the light. At the foot of a cross sits MORCA, behind him stands JAHLO.*

MORCA. Jahlo, has the messenger returned?

JAHLO. He has, and reports the knight close upon his heels. The truth is, that fetching Wilfred to a fight, is like hurrying a lion to his dinner: impatience hinders his speed. He will come blundering along presently.

MORCA. His pace is drowsy compared with my wish; He must come to-night, or 'twill be too late. The time has come at last, now tis my turn; And for ten minutes' sight, ay, for one look, When my moment of triumph is come— I would give my hereafter for that one glance! (*rising*) But no, with this groping pace, I shall *feel* My way into a dishonor'd grave! He who made me blind, made me heartless, Bloody, cruel, robbed me of every Sweet and gentle thought, and left me cold—cold! My fingers are clutching that mystic portal, I'll pull its pliant bolt assunder soon!

JAHLO. And walk in uninvited. You will receive a cold welcome. I intend to stay not only until I'm invited, but absolutely fetched. Death is a door you may enter without ceremony ; and all alike must stoop at the threshold. Your pale face is a standing invitation to that shadowy land, with an unpleasant destination, while my laugh is an antidote against that thief of the living. Hast been invited to Gaslie's wedding feast ? you have chosen a dull place to watch the spectacle. His loving manner hath not softened you much.

MORCA. Ay, boy, I shall be at the wedding, But not in marriage garments—Hark ! Our traveller comes—away, Jahlo, guide him here.

WILFRED. (*without*) Who keeps the watch to night ?

JAHLO. Darkness is a hood for men, if not for cats. This way the sentry lies, Sir Wilfred. You will have to cover your words, as well as your heels, with felt, or listening will be superfluous.

Enter WILFRED.

WILFRED. I am here at last, brave comrade. Still all murmurs at my tardy coming, For never speed fought space, as I this trip. Ar't well ?

MORCA. With my blood at fever heat, my long sought hope Within grasp of my hand, I must be well.

WILFRED. Whom have we here ?

MORCA. None save Jahlo.

WILFRED. Dismiss him hence—we need no idler.

MORCA. True. Never again will my anguish'd
soul

Find relief in the heart-soothing jest !

Jahlo, go sit at the postern, and warn us

If any come this way.

JAHLLO. A sign of dark work, when men meet at
night, and fear being seen. *Exit.*

MORCA. Knight, the phantom of my dreams is at
my grasp ;

Hope's future is changed to the present.

Here, at my finger tips, is my revenge ;

The turn of a drowsy hour—it is mine !

O, I have never lived till now.

WILFRED. Your words are martial clad, bold, and
certain !

Now tell your plan, and victory is ours.

Why is the chapel so luminous to-night ?

MORCA. To realize the truth of your prophecy :

This night Gaslie weds a Calanth !

WILFRED. Your sister Filina ?

Rumor, then, is true ; the news sickened me

As though I had breathed the simoon's hot blast !

Those words have done

What Europe in arms would have failed in —
Made me tremble!

MORCA. Not a word more, an you love me.
She is a lie, a foul blot in my blood,
A worm gnawing the escutcheon of my honor —
A weed usurping some floweret's bud,
Or the chastising rod of some past foul act!

WILFRED. That sun hath left my path forever!
I have cherished that hope as a lost one
Would watch a crevice in the gate of heaven;
Eternity hung upon its hinges!
Why, she hath been my guide-star out of peril.
On the battle's eve I invoked her aid,
And in victory's hour stooped to worship her!
How changed is my dream! But one honor left —
The death of a soldier!

MORCA. I have shut her out from my heart,
Would to God, I could from my memory!
For Gaslie!

WILFRED. Carrion! he shall die!
I will take him as he took Godfrey,
In pleasure's lap, and smite him to the dust!
Must Normandy conquer abroad,
Yet at home be usurped by a Dane?
By the red cross of my knighthood he dies!
This very moment shall my sword —

MORCA. Stay! this is madness; stay, I entreat thee,
Will you spoil all, by one rash step. Hark,
They are entering the chapel.

(solemn music, with chanting)

List the music, how sweet it discourses.

WILFRED. Ay, it hath frozen my very blood,
Benumbed my senses, unnerved my right arm.
What mystic charm unveils itself in those strains?
Some strange voice in it makes my flesh creep.
Again! it recalls the past scenes of strife,
The battle's hum, the dying's trembling moan,
An army breathing after victory!
Sadly rising, too, comes some brave comrade's voice,
Sending his last word to the far, far home,
Where beating hearts dream not of his bloody couch!
Thrilling tones from lips now turned to dust
Salute my ears with their gentle complaints;
'Tis a mother's voice mourning a lost son—
Alas, that is past! What enchantment is it
That thus unmans me?

MORCA. Peace. It is music!
The echo of a voice that bade worlds Be!
Offspring of a sound that rang through chaos
When He cried—Let there be light!
O, music, music, e'er since my senses
Knew the ecstasy of mellow sounds,

How I have worshipped thy rich harmony !
But for thee, my soul would be blinder
Than my body, duller than the wet earth.
Melancholy rides upon thy wings,
And kindness sits beneath thy shadow.
When my heart, sternly brooding oe'r its wrongs,
Hath knit me into a very knot of woe,
My agony hath fled at thy approach,
And like the cured leper, I stood up whole !
Cleanse, O, cleanse my heart with thy melody,
As fire purges gold from its base alloy.
Dost hear ? Death brings no terrors save thy loss !
But come when mortality hath sealed me,
When my brain, heart, hand, grief, all, all is
dust,
When my very name is a passing cloud,
Come, and my soul shall rift death's cerements,
To bathe again in the euphony of song !—
That eternity may be one strain of music !

(martial music)

WILFRED. Why now its tones have changed ;
Instead of sadness, gleams bold defiance.
It speaks of war, and merry clash of arms,
See the serried ranks of the coming foe,
Mark the flashing swords, and burnished shields,
The undulating plumes and sea of casques,

They come! the murmured oath steals through our
ranks,

A shout! we clutch and leap to the contest;
Such cut and thrusts and murderous strokes,
Hand to hand, foot to foot, death encounters;
Mixed with the bugle's command, the rally cry,
The crash of battle-ax, and twang of bows —
O, it makes a music that maddens!
What a shout is that, that heralds victory!

(music ceases, and lights extinguished)

MORCA. Silence, the music and lights are gone!
She is the wife of Gaslie de Byrne;
The moment to act is come.

WILFRED. What is your plan for action? for I feel
This night a match for fifty Gaslies.

MORCA. Listen: this night Gaslie presents himself
At my father's tomb, unarmed and unattended;
There he invokes the shades to witness
His expiation, and grant him pardon.
If the ghosts molest him not, he is free:
So runs the legend. Be it our part
To strike him if the dead do not!

WILFRED. Ha, 'tis a custom the Danes taught him,
And will not prove prosperous to his suit.
Let us haste then, if one may find his way
Through the gloom of such a night.

MORCA. Follow me, I am familiar with it;
Every step on't I have trod a thousand times.
This night will finish my blindness!

SCENE II.—*Near a convent, the tomb of Godfrey in the center. Night. Enter MORCA and WILFRED.*

MORCA. Here is the place; within this sepulcher
Sleeps the race of Calanths; all but one,
And he is weary, and longs to follow them.

WILFRED. The moon has shrouded her face in
clouds

As if she knew our purpose, and would hide
The scene from mortal sight. We are in time.

MORCA. Ay, time enough.
This rude, cold slab, will make a meager couch
For our princely bridegroom. Yet, eased of life,
He will nestle to it as dead leaves to the soil.
Ah, there is the canker of bloom — of life,
That live we i' the sand, or eagle's eyrie,
Dressed in fine linens or covered with rags,
Wise as Solomon or base as swine,
Our delicate senses and noble forms
Will one day sink like rain into the earth!

WILFRED. Will he come, Morca? Fear you not
The bride's charms may overcome his penitence,
And grant him dissolution for a night?

MORCA. Trust me, he will come.
Of late he hath tried to soothe the edges
Of my sorrow, and thinks in his heart
That this act, of all others, will appease me.
Hark! his step, as I live.
This is my place; hide thou behind there;
And when I pronounce the word *justice*,
Strike him, fell him to the earth! then fly!
Soft, give me thy hand—'tis firm as iron,
Solid as thy friendship. Good. Farewell.
We may never, ay, never meet again;
Keep me in thy heart, a shade of the past.
When you think of me, picture me not blind,
But happy as in my childhood.

WILFRED. Nay, you shall be Duke—

MORCA. Hush, he comes—away—

MORCA *stoops behind the tomb*, WILFRED *retires*.

Enter GASLIE.

DUKE. The night lowers o'er me, like some stern
giant

Forbidding my approach.

Darkness sentinels the moldering dead.

He must be bold that desecrates the grave;

Fear, more ghastly than ever phantom was,

Guards the sepulcher's moss-grown door.

My eyes, half fearful find each shade a ghost,

And my step falters with uncertainty.
Peste! this is but cowardice.
With one sweep I could scare a league of phantoms.
This is the Calanths' tomb, the last of which
My ambition hath grossly injured.

(The convent bell strikes.)

Ha! that iron echo leaps through the air,
As though it called the dead to welcome me.
Be still, my heart. Godfrey of Normandy,
I, Gaslie de Byrne, thy valiant sworn foe,
Do call thee from the grave to witness
My penitence and deep contrition;
If thou hast aught to say, rise—I bid thee!

(MORCA rises and confronts him.)

By Erik! he stands before me:
His white face strikes terror to my heart,
And my brain reels like a drunken man.
Let me speak to it.—Why stand ye there,
Glaring with pointed finger upon me?
Com'st thou to forgive or revenge?
Speak, shadow! If for war, why then come on;
Call up the skeleton horrors to aid,
And with my glaive I'll scatter them to the wind.
Speak phantom, what wilt?

MORCA. What I will have—justice!

(WILFRED advances and strikes him. They struggle:

MORCA *hastes and stabs GASLIE in the back.*)

MORCA. Down, wolf! down thou satyr!

What, can this puny steel conquer thee!

The pebble has slain the philistine!

DUKE. Oh, a curse upon my folly!

My sword! Oh for my trusty falchion!

Holy Francis, give me my weapon,

And half a minute of life! I'd teach

The assassins how a soldier falls!

My strength fades with the blood that leaves in streams.

I, that have stood the fiercest battles' brunt,

To fall a victim to a blind man's dagger!

Oh give him to me here, and let this hand

Once close upon him, I'll redeem my honor.

Filina — wife — I die — my thoughts crowd quick;

Hang up my shield — down, down my head —

Ha! not yet. Caffa — Caffa to the rescue! (*Dies.*)

MORCA. Call, call! they shall travel fast that find thee!

Dead! dead so soon! Why, recreant Duke,

Where are the lips that bade them pluck out mine eyes?

Cold and still: no word lingers upon them.

You are at my feet: they spurn you in scorn.

Where are thy guards? thy wife? thy lovely bride?

Is this your nuptial bed? Rise,—the bride calls!
Ha! God has left the world—The moon is dead—
The stars are in ashes—Even the sun is blind!

CAFFA. (*without.*) This way guards.

WILFRED. Morca, come, we are discovered; away!
Put up your dagger: rise—let go his hand.
Let go I say; is he not dead? Be quick;
They are upon us! (*Exit, dragging Morca.*)

SCENE III.—*Ante-chamber in the Palace.* Enter MANUS.

MANUS. What strange sounds disturb the night?
I could have sworn I heard the clash of swords
And angry voices in strange melee.
A sad foreboding has kept me from my couch;
These alarums of strife confirm my fears.
Hark, the call to arms! something is abroad.
(*The bugle sounds.*)

Footsteps approach: Who is it that flies?
(*Enter MORCA running, JAHLO following.*)

MORCA. There never sounded music so sweet
As that last groan. Jahlo, boy, the blood flowed—
I did not see it, but I *felt* it.
'Twas hot! though not so hot as mine. No! no!
Mine seeths in my veins, burns my very flesh!
This arm hath slain a Duke, a mighty Duke!
With my dagger's point I thrust him in 's grave!

It is all over — hope, life and revenge,
All gone. And now we'll be merry, Jahlo.
Oh boy, my heart is so full, so full!

JAHLO. Ay, good page, and so are your hands, full
of blood.

MANUS. What distemper's this that mads him!
That bloody dagger tells a deed of shame.
What does this mean?

(*Enter WILFRED, armed cap a pie.*)

WILFRED. Retribution, friend! Retribution!
The gaudy stuff that trickles from his fingers
Is the life-blood of Gaslie de Byrne.
You'll find him at yon tomb robed in purple,
Lying in the state majesty of death.

(*Sound of trumpets.*)

MORCA. Ha! dost hear those merry ringing bells?
Every peal is a shout of joy for me!
Why do you stand so grim, so silent there,
When all are mad with merriment?
What's this? Horror! here is a fiend
Biting at my heart! See, he tears my flesh —
Munches me with his crooked red fangs!
Let go, thou vampire! touch not my blood,
Or, by the God of vengeance, I'll cut thee asunder!
There (*striking*) he flies! he flies in terror!

WILFRED. Manus, throw away your disguise, friend,

And away with Morca to the throne-room ;

His delirium is but a passing vapor.

I will go raise my legions, and Morca

Shall be proclaimed Duke of Normandy.

Be quick, ere the tumult rise!

[*Exit.*

MANUS. Speak to him, Jahlo,

His memory may still answer thee.

JAHLO. Page, comrade, the feast is waiting ; come, this is the bridal night, and we must all dance at the wedding.

MORCA. Nay, I'll none of it ! (*drops the dagger.*)
No, rather let us go forth and meet the spring,
And I'll bathe my heart in honey-dew,
And thou shalt weave me a chaplet of buds,
To cover my blindness.

MANUS. Thou hast gained revenge at a sad price.

Lead him forth Jahlo ; see, he beckons thee.

His spirit talks : see how he nods and frowns,

And shakes so mournfully his head.

Alas ! sorrow settled early in his heart.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Throne-room.* MORCA seated on the chair of state, with the coronet and scepter of the dukedom. Soldiers bear in on a bier the dead body of GASLIE. JAHLO seated at the foot of the throne. Enter hur-

riedly CAFFA, DURHL, WILFRED, KNIGHTS *and retainers*, *armed, and swords drawn.*

CAFFA. Peace. Soldiers, is this a time for words? See where the murdered Duke lies unrevenged! If ye must draw your swords, be it in *his* cause.

DURHL. Let him lie there. He was no rightful Duke:

He unseated Godfrey to seat himself.
His fate is just. My sword shall rust in its sheath
Ere I will strike a blow for Gaslie.

1st. KNIGHT. True — a curse upon the Danish boor.
Methinks if Normandy lacks a leader,
The crown might become some Norman soldier.
I for one throw down my glaive for the claim;
He that disputes it, let him beware!

(throws down the glaive,)

WILFRED. Another word, soldier, and I'll stretch thee
In company with thy glaive forever.
Duke? who should be Duke but he? Look up, sir,
And lower your plume. 'Tis Normandy's Duke.

(they crowd around the throne)

DURHL. Shall we be governed by a blind boy?
Lives the soldier who will obey?

WILFRED. He dies that disobeys but a nod
Of yon pale, but regal occupant. Nay,

My bugle's call will bring my far-famed band,
Who, like uncaged lions, would destroy thee!
From Sicily to Iceland my bold name
Is a talisman of deathless victory.
Lift not the latch to my caged anger,
But doff your casques, and shout—Long live the Duke!

ALL. Long live the Duke!

Enter FILINA.

FILINA. Who says the Duke lives? show him to me,
That I may fall and worship him.
Up and down the palace, all this long night,
Has a voice cried, "The Duke is murdered."
Why do you bow before that chair? 'tis not he
That owns Normandy and this bleeding heart.
Caffa, where is the Duke?

CAFFA. Behold him! (*pointing to Morca*)

FILINA. Liar, was it he that scarce an hour since
Stood with me at the altar and called me wife?

WILFRED. There lies the bridegroom;
It was not *thee* he wedded, 'twas death.

FILINA. Ha! the bridegroom! (*lifts up the cloak*)
Gaslie, lord, husband! How cold—cold!
Look eyes, and weep forever; this is he,
The martial voice with its clarion ring,
The haughty tread and tall majestic form—
That courageous and heroic heart!

Lies here, here in this clod, streaked with blood !
Which of you has done this ? Where is the brave
That counts among his deeds that murder ?
Let that soldier step forth, that at his feet
I may lay a broken heart, a trophy
Of a fiend's barbarity. (*they point to the throne*)
He !

MORCA. (*raising his hands*) O, Father, lift, lift me
from this world,
The mark of Cain is on my brow,
And in my heart murder crouches !

FILINA. Rather, O, lightnings of justice, strike him !
Beneath that calm face he hides a heart of hell.
He hath raised his armed hand at my life,
Bound me with an oath to a murderer's fate,
Gnawed with venomous teeth my soul's repose,
Stole upon my only moment of sweet joy,
And with a bloody hand maimed me forever !

MANUS. Lady, forbear ; believe me, terrible thoughts
Are fighting in your brother's stormy heart.
See, he rises : how his face lightens.

MORCA. (*starting up*) Blindness, avaunt ! God hath
lit my temple
With the radiance of his eye—the sun.
My brain is filled with rays of light—I see !
O, what a gift is that, precious, precious sight.

Beams of fire gleam in my eyeless sockets,
Which my sad tears are trying to drown.
But, Jahlo, look ye how changed the world is:
Are these the paths and fields of yesterday?
O, let me weep away that terrible change.
Away! in such a guilty moment as this,
I would not gaze upon my childhood's haunt
For the glory of an archangel! Ha!
Who is this that bends toward me from the sky,
Robed in clouds of crystal brilliancy?
In his train come floating streams of music;
Hill, dale, and meadow, woo him with their smiles,
And flowers nod him perfumed welcomes.
He nears me fast with open arms and anxious mien;
His lips move, and the sighing air echoes,
"My son!" Father! I come! I—

(leaps forward and dies)

FILINA. Thy last words condemn me beyond hope,
That father that received thee with smiles,
Will spurn me as a traitor to his blood.
Life, thou curtain to the great unknown,
Lift aside thy folds, let me in to him
Who sits in everlasting night and silence!
Brother, thou art revenged!

(sinks down by MORCA, and dies)

WILFRED. Soldiers, lay the hapless pair in regal
 state,
 And ere the new Duke enters his reign,
 Let us honor the last of the Calanths.
 Posterity, perchance, may find a niche
 For the fate and deeds of the BLIND PAGE!

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